this, lets conditions continue which yield the fruitful ground of justified dissatisfaction and thus lead the way for the world revolution which many seek" (112).—*Translated by Stephen Wentworth Arndt* □

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Notes and Comments

THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Shortly after World War I, Romano Guardini formulated a sentence that soon became a standard quotation in German Catholicism: "An event of incalculable importance has begun: the Church is awakening in people's souls." The Second Vatican Council was the fruit of this awakening. It put into words and dedicated to the entire Church what had matured in the way of a knowledge born of faith in the four decades between 1920 and 1960 which were so full of beginning and hope. In order to understand the Second Vatican Council, we must take a look at this period and try to recognize, at least in broad strokes, the lines and currents that led to the Council. I want to begin in each case with the notions that were held during this period in order to develop from them the basic elements of conciliar doctrine in the Church.

1. The Church as the body of Christ

a. The image of the Mystical Body

"The Church is awakening in people's souls"—this sentence of Guardini's was formulated very thoughtfully, for it was especially important to him that Church be known and experienced as something inward, as something that does not stand in opposition to us like some mechanical device, but is alive in us. If the Church had been seen until then as all structure and organization, the insight now arose that we ourselves are the Church. It is more than an organization, it is an organism of the Holy Spirit, something alive encompassing us all from within. This new consciousness of Church found its linguistic form in the term "the mystical body of Christ." A new and liberating experience of the Church expressed itself in this formula. At the end of his life, in the year in which the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church was adopted, Guardini once again formulated the new view: Church "is not an institution that was thought out and constructed . . . but a living being. . . . It lives again through time; becoming, just as everything alive becomes; changing . . . and nevertheless always the same in essence, for its innermost core is Christ. . . . As long as we see the Church as only an organization . . . ; as an authority . . . ; as a coalition . . . , we do not yet have a correct understanding of it. [I]t is a living being, and our relation to it must itself be life."

It is difficult to express the enthusiasm and joy which at that time rested in such a realization. In the period of liberal thought

which existed up until World War I, the Catholic church had been considered an ossified apparatus obstinately resisting the achievements of the modern age. In theology, the question of papal primacy had predominated to such an extent that the Church appeared to be essentially a centrally governed institution which one stubbornly defended, but which somehow still confronted one only from the outside. Now it was apparent again that the Church is much more; that all of us carry it together in faith in a living way, just as it carries us. It became apparent that it grows organically, just as it has through the centuries, so too today. It became apparent that the mystery of the Incarnation remains present through it: Christ marches on through the ages. If then, we ask which elements of this first beginning have remained constant and have entered into the Second Vatican Council, we can say that the first one is the christological determination of the concept of the Church. J. A. Mohler, the great awakener of Catholic theology after the devastation of the Enlightenment, once said that one could caricature a certain false theology with this sentence: "Christ founded the hierarchy at the beginning and that sufficiently provided for the Church until the end of time." But in reply to this one must say that Church is the mystical body, i.e., that Christ grounds it ever anew, that in it, he is never just past but always and above all present and future. Church means the presence of Christ, our contemporaneity with him, his contemporaneity with us. It lives from Christ's dwelling in our hearts; from there he forms the Church for himself. For that reason, the Church's first word is Christ and not itself; it is sound in the measure that all attention is directed towards him. The Second Vatican Council placed this insight at the head of its considerations by beginning *Lumen gentium* [hereafter *LG*], 21 November 1964, with the words; "*Lumen gentium cum sit Christus.*" Because Christ is the light of the world, there is the mirror of his glory, the Church, which transmits his splendor. If one wishes to understand the Second Vatican Council correctly, one must begin with this first sentence again and again.

The aspects of interiority and of the communal character of the Church are to be seen as a second element from this beginning. Church grows from the inside out, not vise-versa. Above all, it means that the most intimate communion with Christ forms itself in the life of prayer, in the life of the sacraments, and in the basic attitudes of faith, hope, and love. If, then, someone asks "What must I do for the Church to come about and to progress?", the answer has to be, you must above all seek after faith, hope, and love. Prayer builds the Church, and the community of the sacraments in which the prayers of the Church are heard return to us.

This summer I encountered a pastor who told me that what weighed upon him most when he took over his pastoral responsibilities was that for decades no vocations to the priesthood had emerged from his parish. What was he to do? One cannot make vocations, only the Lord himself can give them. But do we then have to lay our hands in our laps? With this concern, he decided to make a pilgrimage each year along the arduous path to the Marian shrine in Altötting and to invite all who shared his concern to go along and to pray with him. More and more people went each year, and this year, to the immeasurable joy of the whole village, they were able to celebrate for the very first time a mass for a newly ordained priest.

The term "body of Christ" tells us that Church grows from within, but precisely because of this direction it includes another dimension: Christ has built body for himself, and I must fit into it as a humble member. It is not to be found or had in any other way. But once found and had it is so entirely, for I have become its member and its organ in this world and thus for all eternity. With this realization, the liberal idea that Jesus is interesting but the Church an unsuccessful affair is ruled out quite automatically. Christ exists only in his body but never in a merely spiritual way. That means that Christ exists with the others, with the permanent community that continues through the ages and is his body. The Church is not an idea but a body, and the scandal of the Incarnation on which so many of Jesus's contemporaries foundered continues. But here also the saying holds: blessed is he who is not scandalized by me.

The communal character of the Church necessarily means its "We" oriented character. It does not exist in some place, rather we ourselves are it. Of course, no one can say, "I am the Church;" but each one can and must say, "*We* are the Church." And "we" is again not a group that isolates itself, but one that holds itself within the entire community of the members of Christ, both living and dead. In this way a group can truly say, "We are the Church." Church exists in this open We which breaks through social and political boundaries, but also the boundary between heaven and earth. We are Church—from this there grows co-responsibility and the opportunity for each of us to co-operate; from this there also results the right to criticise, which might nonetheless entail self-criticism. For Church, I repeat, is not in some place nor is it someone else, we ourselves are the Church. These notions matured in the Council. All that was said about the common responsibility of the laity and the legal forms created for its meaningful realization grew out of this insight.

Finally, the notion of development and thus of the historical dynamics of the Church belong here as well. A body remains identical with itself precisely by continuously becoming new in the process of life. For Cardinal Newman the notion of development was the bridge to his conversion to Catholicism. While I believe that it numbers among the decisive and fundamental concepts of Catholicism, it is far

from having been considered adequately, even though the Second Vatican Council has the merit of having formulated it for the first time in a solemn magisterial document. Whoever wishes to cling to the literal test of Scripture or to the forms of the patristic Church banishes Christ into the past. The result is either an entirely sterile faith that has nothing to say to the present, or an arbitrary act that skips over two thousand years of history, throwing them into the waste-bin of failures, and then concocting how Christianity—according to Scripture or according to Jesus—should really look. But what results can only be an artifical product of our own making in which there is no inherent permanence. True identity with the origin exists only where there is a living continuity that develops it and in so doing perserves it at the same time.

b. Eucharistic ecclesiology

But we must once again return to the developments of the preconiliar period. As already mentioned, the first phase of the rediscovery of Church centered around the concept of the mystical body of Christ. The concept was developed from Paul and pushed both the notions of the presence of Christ and the dynamics of the living into the foreground. Further research led to new realizations. Above all, Henri de Lubac in a splendid work of extensive scholarship made clear that the term *corpus mysticum* originally designated the most Holy Eucharist and that for Paul, as well as the Church Fathers, the notion of the Church as the body of Christ was inseparably bound to the notion of the Eucharist in which the Lord is bodily present and gives us his body to eat. Thus a eucharistic ecclesiology arose which has also been called a *communio*-ecclesiology. This *communio*-ecclesiology became the core of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Church, and at the same time the central element the Council wished to convey.

What then is meant by eucharistic ecclesiology? I shall try to indicate only very briefly a few of its central points. The first is that Jesus's last supper is recognized as the true act of the founding of the Church. Jesus bestows the liturgy of his death and resurrection on those who are his and thus bestows on them the feast of life. He repeats the Sinai-Convenant at the Last Supper, or rather what was there only as a beginning in signs now becomes a completed reality—the community of blood and life between God and man. In saying this, it is clear that the Last Supper anticipates the cross and resurrection and at the same time necessarily presuposes them, for otherwise it would all remain an empty gesture. For that reason, the Church Fathers could say so beautifully that the Church sprang from the opened side of the Lord, out of which flowed both blood and water. Seen from another angle, it is the same as saying the last supper is the beginning of the Church. For it always means that the Eucharist

joins men together, not only with one another but also with Christ thus making them Church. At the same time, the fundamental constitution of the Church also says: Church lives in eucharistic communities. It is liturgical service in its constitution and in its essence, liturgical service and therefore the service of man in the transformation of the world.

That the liturgy is the Church's form means that there is a peculiar and otherwise non-occurring relation between multiplicity and unity. In every eucharistic celebration, the Lord is entirely present. Because he is truly risen and will die no more, one can no longer divide him. He always gives himself whole and undivided. For that reason, the Council says: The Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, insofar as they are united to their pastors, are quite appropriately called Churches in the New Testament. For these are in fact, in their own localities, the new people called by God in the power of the Holy Spirit and as the result of full conviction (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5). . . . In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church is consituted" (*LG*, 26). This means that from the beginnings of a eucharistic ecclesiology there follows an ecclesiology of the local Churches, which is characteristic for the Second Vatican Council and represents the inner, sacramental reason for the doctrine of collegiality.

First, however, we must look more closely at the formulation of the Council in order to appropriate its teaching correctly. For on this point the Second Vatican Council comes into contact with impulses at once from Orthodox and Protestant theology, which it nonetheless integrates into a larger Catholic view. The notion of eucharistic ecclesiology was first of all expressed in the Orthodox theology of Russian theologians in exile, and thereby was opposed to the alleged Roman centralism: every eucharistic community, it was said, is entirely Church already because it has Christ entirely. External unity with other communities is not constitutive for the Church, and for that reason unity with Rome cannot be constitutive for Church. Such unity is good because it represents the fullness of Christ towards the outside but it does not really belong to the essence of the Church because one cannot add anything to the totality of Christ.

From another point of view, the Protestant notion of Church pointed in the same direction. Luther was no longer able to recognize the Spirit of Christ in the Church as a whole. Indeed, he practically saw it as the instrument of the antichrist. Nor could he consider the established Protestant Churches which arose from the Reformation Church in the true sense since they were only sociologically and politically functional devices under the leadership of the political powers and nothing more. For him, the Church withdrew into

the community: only the congregation which hears the Word of God on the spot is the Church. For that reason, he replaced the term "Church" with the term "community" and Church became a negative concept.

Turning to the text of the Council, we will notice several interesting nuances. It does not simply say, "The Church exists wholly in every community celebrating the Eucharist." Rather, the formulation runs: "The Church is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, insofar as they are united to their pastors, are also quite appropriately called Churches." Two elements are important here. First, the community must be "legitimate" in order for it to be Church, and it is legitimate "insofar as it is united to the pastors." What does that mean?

First of all, it means that no one can make himself into the Church. A group cannot simply get together, read the New Testament, and say, "We are now Church because the Lord is there wherever two or three are gathered in his name." The element of receiving belongs essentially to the Church, just as faith comes from hearing and is not the product of one's own resolutions or reflections. For faith is an encounter with that which I cannot think up or bring about through my own achievements but which simply has to encounter me. We call this structure of receiving and encountering "sacrament." And for this very reason, that a sacrament is *received* and that no one administers it to himself both belong to its basic form. No one can baptize himself, no one can confer holy orders on himself, no one can absolve himself from his sins. This structure of encounter is the reason that perfect contrition cannot of its essence remain inward but desires the form of sacramental encounter. For that reason, it is not only an infraction of external canonical directives when one passes the Eucharist around and takes from it oneself but a violation of the innermost structure of the sacrament. The fact that the priest is allowed in the case of this single sacrament to administer the holy gifts to himself points to the *mysterium tremendum* to which he finds himself exposed at the Eucharist. He acts "in the person of Christ" and thus represents Christ *and* at the same time is a sinful man who lives entirely from the reception of the gift.

One cannot make Church but only receive it, that is receive it from where it already is and where it really is: from the sacramental community of Christ's body passing through history. But something else is added which helps us to understand the difficult term "legitimate communities." Christ is wholly present everywhere, that is the one and very important thing the Council formulated in common with our Orthodox brethren. But he is only one everywhere, and therefore I can have the one Lord only in the unity that he himself is, in the unity with the others who also are his body and are to become it ever anew in the Eucharist. Therefore the unity with one another of the communities celebrating the Eucharist is not an external addition to Eucharistic ecclesiology but its inner condition: the one Christ is found only in unity. To that extent, the Council calls on the self-respsonsibility of the communities and yet excludes all self-sufficiency. It presents an ecclesiology for which being Catholic, i.e., the community of believers of all places and all times, is not organizational externals but grace coming from within and at the same time a visible sign of the power of the Lord who alone can give unity across so many boundaries.

2. The collegiality of bishops

The notion of episcopal collegiality, which likewise numbers among the main pillars of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, is most intimately connected with Eucharistic ecclesiology. This notion grew out of the study of the liturgical structures of the Church. If I am not mistaken, the first one to formulate it clearly and thereby open the door for the Council on this point was the Belgian liturgical scholar, Bernard Botte. This is important because the connection with the liturgical movement of the time between the World Wars becomes apparent here also. The liturgical movement was the true breeding ground for most of the realizations presented thus far. Beyond the historical dimension, the liturgical movement is important because it illustrates the inner connection of notions without which one cannot understand them correctly. The dispute about collegiality is not a quarrel between Pope and bishops concerning their shares of power in the Church, although it can degenerate into such a quarrel very easily and those concerned must ask themselves ever again whether they are on the wrong track. Nor is it really a quarel about legal forms and institutional structures. Rather, collegiality is in essence ordered to that service which is the true service of the Church, the liturgical service. Bernard Botte took his concept from the oldest liturgical orders. This was pointed out to the opponents of collgeiality who during the Council referred to the fact that collegiality had a meaning in Roman law and in the cooperative law of the early modern period but is not to be harmonized with the Church constitution. A possible conception of the notion of collegiality is touched on here which would distort the sense of ecclesiastical service. For that reason, it is important to return ever again to the core in order to protect it from such distortions.

What, then, does this mean? In his investigations, Botte pointed to two levels of the notion of collegiality. The first level consists in the fact that the bishop is surrounded by a college of presbyters. We have already mentioned what is meant by this, namely, that the primitive Church was not familiar with a self-sufficiency of the individual communities. For the presbyters who serve them belong together; together they are the "council" of

the bishop. The communities are held in the greater unity of the Church as a whole through the bishop. Being a priest always includes a relationship among the priests themselves, as well as a relationship to bishop, which in turn includes a relationship to the Church as a whole. But that means that the bishops for their part may not work by themselves in isolation. Together they form the *ordo* of the bishops, as was formulated in the language of Roman law which divided society into different *ordines*. Later, the word *ordo* became the formal designation for the sacrament of orders. Entrance into a communal service, into the We of those serving, thus belongs to the essential substance of this sacrament. The word *ordo*, incidentally, alternates with *collegium*; both mean the same thing in a liturgical context. Thus the bishop is not the bishop alone but only in the Catholic community of those who were bishops before him, are bishops with him, and will be bishops after him. For the dimension of time is also intended in this word: Church is not something we make today but something we receive from the history of the faithful and something we pass on as unfinished, which will only be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord.

The Council forged these notions along with the concepts of the sacrament of episcopal consecration and the idea of apostolic succession into an organic synthesis. It reminds us that even the apostles were community. Before they received the name "apostles" they appear under the designation "the Twelve." The calling of twelve men by the Lord has a sign character which every Israelite understood: it is reminiscent of the twelve sons of Jacob from which the twelve tribes of Israel arose. Twelve is thus the symbolic number of the people of God; if Jesus calls twelve, then this symbolic gesture says that he himself is the new Jacob-Israel and that now, with these men, a new people of God are beginning. Mark expressed this very clearly in his Gospel: "He named twelve" (3:14). In this connection, one knew that twelve was also a cosmic number, the number of the signs of the zodiac which divides the year, the time of man. The unity of history and cosmos, the cosmic character of salvation history, was thus underscored. The twelve are to be the new signs of the zodiac of the definitive history of the universe. But let us stay with what immediately occupies us: the apostles are what they are only in the togetherness of the community of the twelve which after the betrayal of Judas is therefore once again made full and complete. One consequently becomes a successor of the apostles by entering into the community of those in whom their office is continued. "Collegiality" belongs to the essence of the episcopal office; it can be lived and enacted only in the togetherness of those who at the same time represent the unity of God's new people.

If we ask ourselves what this means practically, we must answer first of all that the Catholic

dimension of the episcopal office (as well as of holy orders and of every community life) is very emphatically underscored. Particularisms thoroughly contradict the idea of collegiality. As formulated by the Council, collegiality is not an immediately legal form but a theological advantage of the first order, both for the law of the Church and for pastoral action. The legal form that represents the immediate expression of the theological reality "collegiality" is the ecumenical council. For that reason, in the new Code of Canon Law the latter is regulated in the context of the article on the episcopal college in particular (can. 336-341). All other forms of application cannot be directly deduced from it but can only form attempts at a secondary mediation of the great fundamental principle in everyday reality. These attempts must always be measured by the degree to which they correspond to the basic content at issue: transcending the local horizon towards the common element of Catholic unity, to which the dimension of the history of faith has always belonged from the beginning and will continue to do so until the coming of the Lord.

3. Church as the people of God

In the treatment of the idea of collegiality, the catchword has been mentioned for which the reader has surely been waiting a long time: Church as the people of God. What does this mean? In order to understand it, we must again return to the developments that preceded the Council. After the first enthusiasm of the discovery of the notion of the body of Christ, the latter was gradually deepened and corrected in a double direction. We have already seen the first correction. It is found above all in the works of Henri de Lubac who concretized the notion of the body of Christ in the light of the eucharistic ecclesiology and thereby opened it to the concrete questions of the legal order of the Church and the relationship of the local Church to the Church as a whole. The other form of correction began at the end of the 1930's in Germany where various theologians raised the criticism that, with the the idea of the mystical body, the relation of the visible to the invisible, of law and grace, of order and life remains ultimately unexplained. They therefore suggested the concept, found above all in the Old Testament, of "the people of God" as the more comprehensive description of the Church. This concept could also be conveyed more easily with sociological and legal categories, whereas the body of Christ remains an image which is important but insufficient for the theological demand for concept formation.

This at first somewhat superficial criticism of the notion of the body of Christ was subsequently deepened from various points of view, from which the positive content developed in terms of which the concept of the people of God entered into the conciliar ecclesiology. A first important point was the dispute about membership in the Church

which resulted following the encyclical on the mystical body of Christ which Pius XII had published on 29 June 1943. He had declared at that time that membership in the Church is tied to three presuppositions: Baptism, right faith, and affiliation with the legal unity of the Church. Non-Catholics, however, were thereby wholly excluded from membership in the Church. In a country where the ecumenical question is so critical, as in Germany, this declaration had to lead to vehement arguments, especially since the Code of Canon Law opened up another perspective. According to the legal tradition of the Church maintained there, Baptism grounds a lasting form of constitutive affiliation with the Church. It thus became apparent that legal thinking can in some case give more flexibility and openness than a "mystical" conception. One wondered whether the image of the mystical body was not too narrow as a point of departure for defining the manifold forms of affiliation with the Church which have existed in the intricacies of human history. For affiliation, the image of the body provides only the notion of "member"; one is either a member or not, there are no intermediate degrees. But—one asked—is then precisely the point of departure of the image not too narrow, since there quite obviously are intermediate degrees? In this way, one came across the term "people of God," which in this respect is more ample and flexible. The Constitution on the Church has taken up precisely this usage when it describes the relation of non-Catholic Christians to the Catholic Church in terms of the concept of "connection," and that of non-Christians with the term "ordainment." It bases itself both times on the notion of the people of God (*LG* 15 and 16).

One can thus say that the concept of the people of God was introduced to the Council above all as an ecumenical bridge. This holds, moreover, in another respect as well. The rediscovery of the Church after World War I was a thoroughly Catholic and Protestant phenomenon; even the liturgical renewal was in no way limited to the Catholic Church. But precisely this commonality also entailed mutual criticism. The notion of the body of Christ was developed in the Catholic Church to the effect that the Church was preferably designated as "Christ living on earth" and described as the Incarnation of the Son continuing until the end of time. That called forth the protest of the Protestants who saw therein an insufferable self-identification of the Church with Christ in which, so to speak, the Church worshipped itself and declared itself infallible. Gradually, however, even Catholic thinkers found—without going so far—that with this formula a definitiveness was ascribed to the speaking and acting of the Church which made every criticism appear as an attack on Christ himself and which simply overlooked the human—all-too-human—element in the Church. The christological difference, it was said, had to be presented again clearly: Church is not identical with Christ but stands opposite him. It is the Church of sinners which needs purification and renewal again and again: it must become Church again and again. The notion of reform thereby became a decisive element of the concept of the people of God, a notion which did not allow itself to be developed from the concept of the body of Christ.

Here we touch on a third aspect that played a role in favoring the notion of the people of God. In 1939, the Lutheran exegete, Ernst Käsemann, published his monograph on the Letter to the Hebrews the title "The Pilgrim People of God." This title practically became a catchword within the compass of the conciliar debates, for it let something be heard which in the course of grappling with the Constitution on the Church was realized more and more clearly: the Church is not yet at the goal. It still has its true hope in front of it. The "eschatological" moment of the concept of the Church became clear. Above all, one was able in this way to enunciate the unity of salvation history, which comprises Israel and the Church together on their pilgrim journey. One was thus able to express the historicity of the Church which is still underway and will first become itself when the ways of time have been traveled and end in God's hand. One was also able to enunciate the inner unity of the people of God itself in which—as in every people—there are different offices and ministries; but above and beyond all such distinctions, all pilgrims are still in the one community of the pilgrim people of God. If, then, one wishes to summarize in catchwords what the prominent elements of the concept of the people of God are which were important to the Council, one could say that here the historical character of the Church becomes clear, the unity of God's history with men, the inner unity of the people of God beyond the boundaries even of the sacramental states, the eschatological dynamics, the preliminary and broken character of the Church ever in need of renewal, and finally the ecumenical dimension as well, i.e., the different ways in which the connection with and ordainment to the Church are possible and actual beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church.

But this already indicates as well what things we should not seek in the concept of the people of God. I may perhaps be allowed to report here in a somewhat more personal manner because I myself was permitted to take a modest part in the prehistory that led to the Council. At the beginning of the 1940's, when the notion of the people of God was thrown up for debate, my theology teacher, Gottlieb Söhngen, came to the opinion on the basis of many partistic texts and other witnesses of the tradition that "the people of God" could indeed be the fundamental concept of the Church, far more so and far better than "the body of Christ." But because he was a very careful man, he was not satisfied with such ap-

proximate certainties but wanted to know more precisely. He thus decided to have a series of doctoral dissertations written on this question, to investigate the matter step by step.

The task fell to me of treating the people of God in Augustine, in whom above all Söhngen thought he detected the notion of the people of God. As I went to work, it soon became apparent that I also had to include the earlier African theologians who had worked in advance of Augustine, especially Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus of Mileve, and the Donatist, Tyconius. Of course, one also had to keep the more important teachers of the East in view, at least such figures as Origen, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom. And finally, a study of the biblical foundations was likewise indispensable. As I was engaged in this, I came across an unexpected finding: the term "people of God" does indeed appear very often in the New Testament, but only in very few places (probably only in two) does it designate the Church, whereas its normal meaning refers to the people of Israel. Indeed, even where it may indicate the Church, the basic meaning "Israel" survives, but the context makes clear that the Christians have now become Israel. We may thus say that the term "people of God" is not a designation for the Church in the New Testament but only in the christological reinterpretation of the Old Testament; thus, it can designate the new Israel through the christological transformation. The normal denomination for the Church in the New Testament is the term *ecclesia* which in the Old Testament designates the gathering of the people through the beckoning Word of God. The term *ecclesia* (Church) is the New Testament variation and transformation of the Old Testament concept of the people of God. It is employed because it includes the notion that new birth in Christ first makes the non-people to be the people. Paul then consistently summarized this necessary christological transformation process in the concept of the body of Christ.

Before I draw the consequences from this, I must still note that in the meantime the Old Testament scholar, Nobert Lohfink, has shown that even in the Old Testament the term "people of God" does not simply designate Israel in its empirical factuality. Seen purely empirically, no people is the "people of God." To present God as a sign of descent or as a sociological mark of identification could never be more than an insufferable presumption and ultimately a blasphemy. Israel is designated by the concept of the people of God insofar as it is turned towards the Lord, not simply in itself but in the act of relationship and of self-transcendence which alone makes it what it is not of itself. To that extent, the New Testament continuation is consistent; it concretizes this act of turning to God in the mystery of Jesus Christ who turns to us and takes us in faith and sacrament into his relationship to the Father.

What, then does all this mean concretely? It means that Christians are not simply the people of God. Empirically considered, they are a non-people, as any sociological analysis can quickly show. And God is no one's property; no one can seize him for himself. The non-people of Christians can only be God's people through inclusion in Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Abraham. Even if one speaks of the people of God, christology must remain the center of the teaching on the Church and consequently the Church must be thought of essentially in terms of the sacraments of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Orders. We are the people of God only from the crucified and risen body of Christ. We become Church only in the living ordainment to it, and it is only in this context that the word has meaning. The Council made this connection clear in a very nice way by placing together with the term "people of God," another and a second basic term for the Church in the foreground: the Church as sacrament. One remains true to the Council only if one always reads and thinks these two central terms of its ecclesiology together, sacrament and people of God. Here it becomes apparent how far ahead of us the Council still is; the notion of the Church as sacrament has still hardly dawned on us.

It would be absurd, therefore, if one wished to deduce a changed conception of the hierarchy and the layman from the fact that the chapter on the people of God comes before the chapter on the hierarchy, as if really all the baptised already bore all the powers of orders in themselves and the hierarchy were only a matter of good order. The second chapter is concerned with the question of laymen insofar as the essential inner unity of all the baptised in the order of grace is declared and the ministrial character of the Church is thereby underscored. But this chapter does not ground a theology of the laity for the quite simple reason that all belong to the people of God. The whole of the Church and its essence are treated here. Its individual states are presented afterwards in this succession: hierarchy (chapter 3), laymen (chapter 4), religious (chapter 6).

If my presentation of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council were to be complete, I should now have to unfold the contents of these remaining chapters as well as what is said on the common vocation to holiness and on the relation of the earthly to the heavenly Church. But that would far exceed the limits of the present discussion. I have been concerned only to indicate briefly the foundations on which all further applications rest. In conclusion, I should like to refer briefly to one thing. The Council's Constitution on the Church closes with the chapter on the Mother of God. The question whether one should dedicate a separate text to her was vehemently disputed, as is well known. I think it was nonetheless a fortunate turn of events that the Marian dimension entered directly into the teaching on the Church itself. For in this

way our point of departure becomes apparent once again at the end: Church is not a mechanical device, not merely an institution, nor one of the usual sociological magnitudes—it is person. It is a woman. It is mother. It is alive. The Marian understanding of the Church is the most decisive antithesis to a merely organizational or bureaucratic concept of the Church. We cannot make Church, we must be Church. We *are* Church and Church is in us only in the measure that beyond our doing faith also molds our being. Only in being Marian do we become Church. Church was not made in its origin but born. It was born when the *fiat* awoke in Mary's soul. The deepest will of the Council is that the Church may awake in our souls. Mary shows us the way.

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INSTRUCTION ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND LIBERATION

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued two documents on the same subject in less than one year. They are the "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" (6 August 1985)[1] and the "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" (22 March 1986)[2]. The first "Instruction" focuses on deviations characteristic of certain forms of liberation theology; the second, while not claiming to be exhaustive, presents a positive vision of Christian freedom and liberation. It also effectively promotes the common good of society, especially the interest of the poor and the oppressed, and at the same time shows how to preserve Catholicism from losing its soul while working for justice and peace. Contrary to reports in the media, the second "Instruction" does not water down assertions made in the first. A number of the same themes are found in both documents—spiritual conversion as a priority over change of structures, sin as an evil greater than poverty and oppression, freedom from sin as the most radical liberation, the social effects of personal sin, love as the supreme rule of social life, the obligation of all to promote the common good, opposition to class struggle, and the openness and limits of Catholic social teaching. The two documents form a unity and must be read together. My comments are limited to a summary of the second "Instruction."

The first chapter summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the modern liberation process. As advantages, it mentions the abolition of legal slavery, development of human rights doctrines, the promotion of equality and fraternity, access to culture for greater numbers of people, and the opportunity in many countries for citizens to participate in political and social life.

[1]See *Origins*, 14 (1984):193-204.
[2]Ibid., 15 (1986):713-728.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith goes into more detail regarding the disadvantages of the modern liberation movement, concluding that the movement remains ambiguous with "threats of deadly forms of bondage." The Congregation asks whether technology can be prevented from becoming an oppressive power and from enslaving future generations. It characterizes as major errors certain Enlightenment beliefs—that progress in science, technology, and economics necessarily promote freedom and that the goal of the self-sufficient individual "is the satisfaction of his own interests in the enjoyment of earthly goods." It also mentions the widespread self-destruction caused by the young seeking liberation in drugs. Lastly, it points out that the modern exaltation of autonomy has led some to regard all morality as an "irrational limit" and many more to regard belief in God as an obstacle to human freedom.

Chapter Two explains the Christian understanding of freedom and sin. Christian liberation is primarily *freedom from* sin and the power of death, accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sin and death are the greatest evils, greater than poverty and oppression. The redemption wrought by Jesus is, therefore, the most radical liberation. Christian liberation is also *freedom for* goodness. The good is the goal of freedom. In consequence man becomes free to the extent that he comes to a knowledge of the truth and to the extent that this truth—and not any other force—guides his will.[3] Christian liberation, then, depends on maintaining the link between truth, goodness, and freedom. There can be no freedom unless the human person can come to a knowledge of the good.

Sin is contempt for God and disordered love of self. Sin is the practical rejection of the truth about human existence. By sinning, people lie to themselves and deny the reality that stares them in the face. Through sin, "man rejects the truth and places his own will above it." In not harmonizing "his will with his nature," a person engages in self-destructive behavior.

Disorders in the human heart, brought about by sin, inevitably cause disorders in the family and in all of society. The root cause of unjust structures is personal sin. Sin "is the radical reason for the tragedies which mark the history of freedom." The connection between sin and societal injustices has been a major theme of John Paul II.

Chapter Three explains the relation of freedom and love in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt cannot be understood simply as a political fact. Its more profound meaning is religious. "God sets his people free and gives them descendants, a land and a law but within a covenant and for a covenant." The central message about freedom of the New Testament is that "grace frees us from sin and places us in communion with

[3]Ibid., p. 718, item #26.